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NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS

TO THE

CONGREGATION OF THE BISHOP'S
CHAPEL,

HALIFAX, N. S.

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PRINTED BY JAMES BOWES AND SONS.

1831.

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NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—

At the commencement of another year of our connexion as Pastor and people, I feel a strong desire to address a few words to you in a printed form, by way of remembrance, and in order that you may hereafter refer to them,—perhaps after the writer shall have put off his harness, and be sleeping in the dust. And in the first place, allow me to wish to every one of you a happy new year, in the fullest sense of that expression. If it please God, may your earthly lot be unclouded by sorrow, sickness, and death, but above all, may your souls prosper and be in health. May they daily grow in grace, and be adorned with all the beauty of holiness. May the love of God in Christ Jesus be abundantly shed abroad on all your hearts, so that you may be living epistles known and read of all men as joined to Christ,* shewing forth the reality of your faith in the godliness of your lives—loving one another, and so fulfilling the law of Christ†—glorifying God in your bodies and in your spirits which are his.‡ Thus may you give comfortable evidence that we have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.§

The years of our connexion in the earthly vineyard, dear brethren, are fast rolling on. Soon you and I will have to

* 2 Cor. iii. 2.

† Romans xlii. 10.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

§ Gal. ii. 2.

give an account of our stewardship. The great day of reckoning is coming on apace. When I reflect that I have already passed more than thirty-six years in the ministry—five of which have been devoted to you—I feel that my days of work cannot be many. And, as each year closes upon me, I am the more anxious to devote the remainder with greater fidelity to the work of the Lord among you—taking more earnest heed to the ministry I have received, that I fulfil it,* teaching every one and warning every one† that through the riches of Divine grace I may present each one of you perfect in Christ Jesus, when we meet face to face before Him, in the world of spirits.

O that, in our respective relations, we may co-operate for this glorious consummation, giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure.‡ Our advantages and our privileges are great, and great and just will be our condemnation if we fail to use them aright. I have often reminded you, dear brethren, of the peculiar advantages you enjoy in the Chapel in which we worship, and which, like the Gospel preached in it, is free—"without money and without price."§ Halifax had stood one hundred and six years before such a place was provided, where the rich and the poor might meet together on equal terms before the Lord, the maker of us all,||—a place, where "the man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel," and the poor man or woman in vile (or coarse) raiment, are side by side,—and no official dares to say to the former, "sit thou here in a good place," while the latter is told to "stand there under the other's footstool."¶ You are indebted to our Bishop, as is well known, for the establishment of this chapel, on the true Scriptural plan of being free to all.

* Col. iv. 17. † Col. i. 28. ‡ 2 Peter i. 10. § Isaiah lv. 1. || Prov. xxii. 2.
¶ James ii. 2.

And a blessing has attended it. Our numbers have increased beyond the expectations of the most sanguine. When we began, five years ago, we counted by dozens only—now, by hundreds, and far more are sometimes obliged to go away than our first congregations amounted to.

Our communicants are more than two hundred.

Our Sunday school contains a like number, and some of its scholars have already been removed to a higher sphere; leaving a good hope behind. Testimonies to the benefits experienced from the ministrations in this chapel, I often hear from the lips of those who before had been strangers to the means of grace; and many a blessing has been invoked in my hearing on the head of him who opened its doors. All this is good and cheering.

Good, that such numbers crowd the courts of the Lord; better still, if they are “doers of the Word, and not hearers only.”* Good, that we have nearly ten times as many communicants now as we once had of attendants; better still, if these shew, day by day, that they have indeed been with Jesus†—are fed with the bread of life, and living members of His Body, the Church.

Good, that such unusual numbers of the *young* attend our services; better still, if “our sons shall grow up as the young plants which the Heavenly Father planteth,‡ and our daughters be as the polished corners of the Temple.”§

So may it be. Let us never forget that though a Paul may plant, and an Apollos water, it is only God that can give the increase; || that ye are God’s husbandry, and God’s building, ¶ and that however flourishing our congregation may seem to be, it will be accounted as nothing before Him, except each of us be animated by His indwelling and sanctify-

* James i. 22. † Acts iv. 13. ‡ Psalm cxliv. 12. § Matt. xv. 13.
|| 1 Cor. iii. 6. ¶ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

ing spirit. Let us not rest in the form of godliness, but ardently seek its life and power.

I trust you will bear us witness that thus you are taught from the pulpit, and from house to house,—not to put your trust in any thing you do, but to remember that after all we do, we are unprofitable servants,* and that Christ is all to the sinner's soul,† and that we are to look for Him in all the ordinances of the Church as the sum and substance, the Alpha and Omega‡ of our religion. In conclusion, suffer the word of exhortation,§ as to a few important particulars :—

1. Let me beseech you to be constant and fervent in private prayer to your Father in Heaven, through His blessed Son. This underlies the whole scriptural building of your salvation. It is the breath of the believing soul. Stopped or intermitted the life of God within us will wither and die. O neglect not, then, this great privilege, and essential duty. Your Saviour enjoins it. “Enter into thy closet and shut thy door and pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret will reward thee openly.”¶ Let nothing hinder you from, at least, its morning and evening exercise, and endeavor, besides, to comply with the direction to pray always ¶—by cultivating a constant spirit of prayer, not forgetting to pray that you may be taught how to pray.

2. If you have children or dependents, let me exhort you to have prayer in your families,—a duty which I fear is too much neglected, but one most influential for good. It has well been called “a morning and evening sermon to remind each member of the family that there is a God above them, and an eternity before them.” It tends to love and peace in the household. It has an influence on

* Luke xvii. 10. † Col. iii. 2. ‡ Rev. i. 8. § Heb. xiii. 27. ¶ Matt. vi. 6.

¶ Luke xviii. 1.

generations yet unborn, inasmuch as those who are children now may be parents then, and may teach theirs again to do the same. Therefore, brethren, if not done already, set up an altar in your dwellings, and never let it be without its morning and evening sacrifice. Manuals of devotion abound, and will be gladly supplied by me. O that all your houses may be houses of prayer, and every soul within them a temple of the living God.

3. "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord."* Alas, that any should be found among us to seek to lessen the obligations of the Lord's day. But we are warned that "false teachers shall arise in these latter days."† I trust you will heed them not, but love more and more that day, "the best of all the seven" which God in his mercy to our souls and our bodies has from the beginning‡ "made for man."§ Remember to keep it holy||—every part of it—not allowing its morning and mid-day hours to slip by unimproved, and only coming to the House of God in the dusk of the evening, as the manner of some is. But come twice at least on the Sunday to seek His face, where His honor dwelleth,¶ unless unavoidably hindered. The days will soon come when we shall no longer be able to tread the Courts of the Lord. Then, bitter will be our lamentations that we have neglected them when we might have been there.

4. Search the Scriptures.** They are written for our learning, and we should read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.†† An open Bible is the glory of our Church. You have it on your shelves. Let it not lie there unopened, or only taken down on the Sunday. Read it daily, and prayerfully, seeking from its pages light and comfort

* Lev. xix. 3. † 2 Peter ii. 1. ‡ Gen. ii. 3. § Mark ii. 27. || Exod. xx. 8.
¶ Psalm xxvi. 8. ** John v. 32. †† Col. for 2nd Sun. in Ad.

and peace—all promised to them who make those pages their study. May you all become like those noble disciples at Berea, "who searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."*

5. Neglect not, I entreat you, that heavenly feast, to which you are so lovingly called and bidden from month to month. I can add nothing on this subject so forcible as the touching exhortation which we read in Church, and which I marvel that any can hear unmoved. While we rejoice that so many do come to the Lord's Table, we desire to have yet more, believing that none can innocently leave the Saviour's dying command undone. Of those who have been confirmed in our chapel, too many have not yet taken this next and most important step to which they were so solemnly pledged at confirmation. O consider earnestly with yourselves, dear brethren, that if you are not fit to come to the Communion, you are not fit to die, and *that* may be your lot ere another opportunity. You must seek the grace of God in the means which He has appointed; and the highest of all these is this Sacrament of Christ's precious body and blood. It is not made for angels, but for poor sinners, who feel themselves such, and are looking to the Cross of Christ for salvation. The more unworthy you feel yourselves to be, the fitter you are to eat and drink at His table. We teach not (because we believe not) that the mere taking of the Sacrament will be enough, but rather as our Church has it, that if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive it, we are one with Christ and Christ with us.† And when you do come, let it be with the resolution of coming *often*.‡ If a good thing at all, it is good always. Some of you, who are already communicants, are unmindful of this, and are too infrequent in your approaches to the Lord's

* Acts xvii. 11. † Communion Service. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 26.

table. I am persuaded that you find the effect of this injurious to the growth of religion in your souls. It is likely to make you more careless, and too probably will lead you bye and bye to give up the Lord and His table together. Come often then, but come clad in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture, which Christ has purchased, and will bestow on you if you ask him.

In conclusion, dear friends, let us all seize the morning hours of this new year, for wholesome meditation on the short comings of the past, and for resolutions of amendment by the grace of God in the future. What are to be the events of the new-born year, what joys or sorrows are before you, whether life or death, who can tell? But this we know, "that all things work together for good to them that love God."* Pray that such may be your character, and then, come what may, all will be well. Some of you are far advanced in the vale of years. Trim your lamps, and be like them that wait for their Lord. Soon you will hear the midnight cry, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.† But who so young as to be beyond the reach of such a cry? How many youthful forms have gone down to the grave in the very last year. And so will it be still. O then give your hearts betimes to your Lord. Leave not religion for the time of sickness or old age, which you may never see; but early seek the Lord, who says He loves them that do so.‡ The world invites you to follow its ways, but you will not find in them comfort in life, nor peace in death.

I write unto you young men,§ surrounded as you are by manifold temptations, earnestly entreating you to be watchful against them, and to pray for that grace which alone can enable you to withstand them all, and especially *that one*,

* Rom. viii. 28. † Matt. xxv. 1. ‡ Prov. viii. 17. § 1 John ii. 3.

whose name is Legion,* the demon of intemperance, the deadly foe of all that should be dear to us for time or eternity. No words can exaggerate the dangerous and destructive influence of this prolific source of all the evils of humanity. May the Lord preserve you from it, or if unhappily you are less or more under its fatal power, may He cast it out as He did the kindred demons of old.

Parents! bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.† They will require all your care and your fervent prayers. Among the proofs that we have fallen upon the "last days," are the disobedience to parents, the insubordination, and the want of natural affection spoken of by St. Paul.‡ Let it be your endeavor to counteract these ungodly tendencies by precept and example. Never grow weary of such endeavors. Especially bear your children, with your daily prayers and intercessions, to the Father's throne. I have an abiding faith in the power of such "strong crying unto God"§ in behalf of our offspring, and more particularly in the efficacy of a *mother's* prayers. Cast this bread upon the waters, and assuredly it will be found, though perhaps not until after "many days."|| They may be wayward, restive, unkind, disrespectful now. They may shun, in their blindness, the society of the father and mother, to whom they are dearer than life itself. They may affect insensibility to your counsel and your entreaties, but under all that, there is a soft place in their hearts still. Bye and bye it will shew itself, perhaps when your heads are in the dust, or when *they* are in some "far country," or on the bed of sickness, or in some other way eating the "bread of affliction," they will remember your loving words, and the home of their childhood, and a mother's care, and their own wilful ways. The fountains of the heart will

* Mark v. 9. † Eph. 6. 4. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 2. § Heb. v. 7. || Eccles. xi. 1.

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gush out, and they will weep for their folly and their ingratitude, at your graves. The long dormant seed will spring up, and they will be brought back to God,* and you will meet them yet in the better land. God forbid, that you should cease to pray for them to Him whose promise is sure, and whose grace is sufficient for all cases, and can convert the worst of hearts. "Have faith in God."† Above all, be careful that your children shall never be able to charge you with leading them astray. Keep them as far as possible from the contamination of wicked companions. Let them punctually attend our Sunday school, where kind teachers wait to do them good, under the personal supervision of those whose duty it is to "feed the sheep and the lambs of Christ."

Finally, brethren beloved in the Lord, let me hope that these plain counsels may be received by you as they are intended, and be regarded as proofs of the affectionate anxiety for your spiritual welfare which has led me to lay these lines before you. May the Lord bless this and every other attempt to edify your souls, is the sincere prayer of your

Friend and Pastor,

JAMES C. COCHRAN.

New Year's Day, 1861.

HYMNS.

I.

See in the vineyard of the Lord,
 A barren fig-tree stands;
 No fruit it yields, no blossom bears,
 Though planted by these hands.
 From year to year the tree he views,
 And still no fruit is found;
 Then "cut it down," the Lord commands,
 "Why cumberst it the ground?"

* Luke xv. 20.

† Mark xi. 22.

But lo ! the gracious Saviour pleads
 "The barren fig-tree spare,
 "Another year in mercy wait,
 "It yet may bloom and bear :

"But if my culture prove in vain,
 "And still no fruit be found,
 "I plead no more—destroy the tree,
 "And root it from the ground !"

II.

I love thy kingdom, LORD,
 The house of thine abode,
 The Church our blest Redeemer saved
 With His own precious blood !

I love thy Church, O God !
 Her walls before thee stand,
 Dear as the apple of thine eye,
 And graven on thy hand.

If e'er to bless thy name
 My voice or hands deny,
 These hands let useful skill forsake.
 This voice in silence die.

If e'er my heart forget
 Her welfare or her woe,
 Let every joy this heart forsake,
 And every grief o'erflow.

For her my tears shall fall,
 For her my prayers ascend ;
 To her my cares and toils be given
 Till toils and cares shall end.

Duties in connexion with the Bishop's Chapel,
1860.

Parochial Visits, (of which 661 were to sick or otherwise afflicted persons) . . .	2,095
Public Services, in whole or in part performed by the Minister . . .	243
Marriages . . .	77
Baptisms . . .	30
Funerals . . .	15
Communicants . . .	215

The LORD be praised.